



CITY OF SOMERVILLE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
March 17 Meeting Minutes

Present

Lara Versari, Commissioner

Mike Henson, Commissioner

Nancy Salamoun, Manager

Nancy Bacci, Deputy Director

Members of the Public Present

Christopher Spicer-Hankle

Elaine Schear

Rosalie Norris

Sidd Pattanayak

Derrick Rice

Lindsey Green

Jack Maniaci (Tufts)

Guest

Tina Lu

Guest concerns about the increase in harassment and hate crimes against Asian Americans

Resident Tina Lu approached the commission to speak directly to the rise in anti-Asian sentiment observed across the nation.

- She asked the commission to speak about the efforts completed or planned in the future to address incidents of hate.
- She asked what policies/procedures are provided for residents to report and recover from hate crimes and harassment.
- She asked what efforts are taking place to educate the public about the rise in anti-Asian racism and assemble a community response.
- She asked how the commission operates, how commissioners are appointed, and what efforts have been made or could be made to publicize its work.

Commissioners and volunteers to the commission took turns addressing the guest's concerns and answering her questions.

- Commissioner Spicer-Hankle addressed the education aspect by mentioning outreach to Dr. Jessica Boston Davis, Director of Equity and Excellence at SPS to promote programs for the prevention of hate and discrimination.
- Commissioners Versari and Henson described last year's Hate Crime Forum and the Active Bystander Training, both sponsored by the HRC.
- Manager Salamoun discussed the HRC's collaboration with Sgt. Perrone of SPD (Family Services Division) about regular reporting of hate crimes to the HRC and the creation of a website for the anonymous reporting of hate incidents. She also mentioned the Somerville Trauma Response Network (STRN) as a resource for victims of hate incidents.
- Volunteer Derrick Rice explained the recommendation and appointment process of commissioners.
- Deputy Director Bacci explained the budgeting process for the HRC.
- Despite all the points made above, all commissioners and those present acknowledged the guest's concerns and agreed with them, including that of the likelihood that hate incidents directed at Asian Americans are significantly underreported. All agreed these concerns should be addressed by whatever means the HRC has at its disposal.
- *Agenda Item for next meeting:* Follow-up discussion of this item, specifically ideas to address it.

Agenda Item for next meeting:

Ideas for summer HRC event, proposed by Commissioner Spicer-Hankle

Immigrant Stories project

Volunteer Sidd Pattanayak drafted the first draft of the letter inviting immigrant restaurant owners to participate and submit a video describing their immigrant experience.

- A call for other volunteers to continue working on the letter with Sidd yielded responses from Lindsey Green, Derrick Rice, and Elaine Schear.
- A supplemental meeting was proposed for Wednesday, March 31 to discuss the letter and any other details.
- Volunteer Derrick Rice proposed uploading the draft to the cloud for others to review prior to the supplemental meeting.

Nency's last day

Thank you to Nency for all the support and guidance you have given to the HRC over so many years!
Best of luck in your new endeavor!

April 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2021

Monthly Meeting

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Mike Henson, Commissioner

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Nancy Bacci, Deputy Director

Members of the Public Present

Elaine Schear

Lindsey Green

Derrick Rice

Amy Henson

Guest

Michael Cox (Exec. Dir. Black and Pink MA)

Immigrant Stories project

Sidd did additional work on the draft letter to Somerville immigrant restaurant owners. He also put together some milestones for the project to track progress. The letter is shared to the HRC and its volunteer group through google docs. Feedback directly onto the letter is welcome.

Also, if anyone is able to build upon the project milestones that Sidd created and help to track progress toward the goal, please notify any of the commissioners.

Guest Speaker Michael Cox, Executive Director Black and Pink Massachusetts

Commissioner Christopher invited the Mr. Cox to address the commission about the work his organization has done to support sex workers. His organization Black and Pink Massachusetts does outreach and supports sex workers, who are stigmatized and marginalized by mainstream society. Goals for the organization are to create more welcoming spaces, transform conditions, and destigmatize sex work.

Another main goal of Black and Pink Massachusetts is to decriminalize sex work. More information can be obtained from the site decrimMA.org. Some ways that the organization supports sex workers is by posting bail and being present at court hearings.

Black and Pink Massachusetts has signed on to some statements condemning Anti-Asian Hate and urges the HRC to do the same.

Commissioner Christopher attended online Hollaback Training

He shared tips that he learned from the training, including checking in with the victim if one is unable to stop the incident as it is occurring.

Commissioner Christopher will also lead the HRC in mustering support to sign on to a statement condemning Anti-Asian hate. He will also help to organize a show-of-support event in solidarity with victims of Anti-Asian abuse. Commissioners Lara and Mike agreed to attend supplemental meeting to push these efforts forward.

Agenda Distribution

Volunteer Elaine asked about distribution procedures of the agenda. Nancy confirmed that they are posted to the HRC page in the city's website. The commissioners will try to ensure that the agenda is emailed directly to regular attendees in the future.

Commissioner and volunteer background information

Volunteer Elaine expressed interest in getting to know the group of commissioner and volunteers and their backgrounds. The commissioners will spend a little more time at the start of each meeting for the attendees to share their backgrounds, particularly with newer attendees.



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